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Τοὺς μὲν Ἀπόλλων πέφνεν ἀπ' ἀργυρέοιο βιοῖο,
Χωόμενος ΝΙΟΒΗ, τὰς δ' Ἄρτεμις ἰοχέαιρα.

HOM. IL. 1. 24. v. 605.—

The sons beneath Apollo's silver bow,
Slumber'd in death; & Dian's arrows blac'd
To slay her daughters, who her wrath had raised.

IT would be a research peculiarly interesting, were it possible at the present day, to trace back the various legends of heathen mythology to their private and individual source. In such an investigation, we should in all probability discover, that domestic incidents, and obscure

transactions, after being embalmed by the pomp of poesy, and heralded by the trump of exaggerating fame, have been finally attributed to more illustrious personages than their real authors, and obtained a place amid gods & heroes, the exploits of the lofty, and the actions of heaven. Perhaps many a solitary deed of individual heroism, which astonished the petty natives of some remote village with its nobleness; many a disastrous tale of love, whose sadness won and whose interest endeared the hearts of those who heard it, though confined to a small sphere of renown; many a hair breadth escape, or wonderful deliverance; many an act of private friendship, and domestic charity; have been made the theme of the village minstrel, and placed among the traditionary songs of yore, till mightier masters touched the strings, & the story which belonged to the unknown & to the obscure, has been expanded into

the narration of demi-gods and deities. The real actors in many a mythological story, perhaps have slept in unconscious silence, while the simple story of their deeds or of their wrongs has been made the theme of poetic inspiration, and the tale of wonder names. Over their forgotten dust, and obliterated sepulchres, the exaggerated song may have been chaunted to the praise of fabulous and imaginary heroes, while these poor relics rested beneath, without a tear to consecrate, or a hand to exalt their memory. Such a consideration as this is at once gratifying and humiliating to the pride of human nature. The exploit was remembered, when the name of the achiever was forgotten; the type recorded what had been done, but other names & other times & other nations have received the honor which the lowly dust below can now no more reclaim. And yet, were their names remembered, what would be gained by it?

Is the simple renown of a deed, which was done in the privacy of life; which called forth the love, the admiration, perhaps the tears & the joy of a grateful heart, and a throbbing bosom; is all this to be exchanged for the pompous eulogium, that swells the story, but forgets its peculiar – its private interest? Who would wish in after times to be exalted into a hero or a god, and the endearments of his affection, the sacredness of his friendship, the brightness of his deeds of love and charity, illumined but seared, exalted but belied, made the subject of renown, but not cherished to the heart, by the proud & pulsifying attempts of human glory? ——

One of the most affecting incidents in fabulous story, is the account which has been given of Niobe, and her offspring. There is a sadness in the tale, which commands at once our attention and our interest. We behold a

tender mother, endeavoring in vain to screen her children from the impending destruction, and herself, as she wept over their loss, converted into a cold and lifeless mass,

——— a statue of distress,
When, her last hope forever gone,
The mother hardened into stone.

Cast unburied on the plain, the slaughtered bodies remained, with no hand to afford a kind sepulture, or perform the last sad offices that man can pay to man:—

——— Ἀπὸ πάντας ὄλεσσαν.
Οἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἐννῆμαρ κέατ' ἐν φόνῳ, οὐδέ τις ἦεν
Καθάψαι· λαοὺς δὲ λίθους ποίησε Κρονίων. —
HOMER: IL. XXIV. v. 609.

To those in whom this story could not wake a throb, or excite a feeling of interest; who could pass it by in indifference, merely because it is considered as a fable, and a fable of times so remote, so uncertain, & so shadowy, as those in which the incident is supposed to have occurred; we should be tempted to exclaim in the language of the madwoman in the romance, if not with her vehemence — "To

"Nea no touch of nature in ye?" *

Could we ascertain the origin of this interesting story, we should probably find much more to excite our feelings. Shipt of its fabulous circumstances — the intervention of offended deities — the lofty rank which the personages held, and of all that now gives to it pomp & Ceremony; we behold a whole family swept away, and the mother a martyr to her sorrow, through the mere influence of female caprice & jealousy. Through the gorgeous decorations with which the story is surrounded, we can discover an incident which might very well have happened in those times of worse than feudal barbarism, and of more than Vandal anarchy. When the oppression of the strong, and the slavery of the weak; the arrogance of the lofty, and the crouching condition of the low, were felt in all their weight; — how easy

* See "Women" — by the author of Bertram, &c &c. —

was it for offended haughtiness to wreak a bloody vengeance on its enemy. A thousand unknown circumstances may have tended to raise the flame of commotion; and though Niobe has been exalted into a princess, & her persecutor into a goddess, the former was in all probability in an inferior station of life, and either by her impudence raised the ire of her superior, or by her virtues excited her envy. Perhaps she loved and preferred her own children to those of others, and boasted of their beauty or their prowess. The bosom that would not brook rivalship or equality, crushed them and their parent to the earth at once, and left to posterity a tale, now garnished with poetic fiction, & enveloped in an uncertain mythology. May we not imagine the grief of this mother, the agonies of these children, torn from the grasp of affection, and made the victims of unrelenting hate, to have been melancholy in the extreme? Here were the ties

of Kindred, and the links of love, snapt asunder forever. The storm and the whirlwind broke over the garden of their hope and of their promise, and in Niobe's mercilefs fury swept all to earth. Their wrongs and their deeds slept altogether in their bloody tomb; and when the abject voice of flattery poured the incense of applause to the perpetrator of the deed, their memory became blackened, and the sadow hue of malignity and of prejudice shadowed them with deadly darkness.

We remember having seen a picture by Wilson, of which, as the subject of it is connected with that our paper, we shall conclude the present number with a short description. It was a pastoral delineation of the execution of the vengeance of Latona's offspring, & exhibited the children of Niobe sinking in various ways under the unerring darts from above. The

[illegible] relative in beauty [illegible]

picture presented the appearance of a wild and terrible storm. A large tree in the foreground, which was intended to give relief to the whole, was bowing in the blast; the wood, on the distant heights seemed to own the sway of the tempest; the ocean in the background was lashed to fury, and broke in tumultuous madness over the lofty cliffs that overhung its billows. The heavens were overspread with thick & heavy clouds; the centre broadly illuminated by the vivid blaze of the enkindled lightning, while the forked bolt broke upon the distant mountains that bounded the view, beneath whose base a village seemed to have taken fire. All the rest was darkness. The high towers on the cliffs, the deep foliage of the foreground, were shadowed with that deep and sombrous hue which generally accompanies a violent storm. Seated on clouds, in one corner of the heavens, were seen the twin forms of Apollo and Diana, directing

their arrows against the objects of their vengeance, who are scattered in groupes below. Two of the sons lay expiring on the ground; others were slain as they attempted to escape in chariots or on horseback. Amid the tumult of the ocean, was a boat exposed to its fury, and about to be overwhelmed. The daughters lay bleeding in the foreground; one was supporting another in the agonies of death, while the mother, seeking shelter beneath the huge tree in front, was endeavoring to fold the youngest to her heart, and screen her from destruction. She stood in an attitude of calm & serene, but despairing sorrow; as if ~~the~~ her merciful metamorphosis into stone was already beginning to freeze the warm current of her veins, & root her to the ground; – as if she was already beginning to experience that horrible stagnation of life, without the loss of feeling, and ~~the~~ with the remembrance of sorrow, which Homer has not forgotten to notice;

Νῦν δέ πο ἐν πέτρῃσιν, ἐν ὄρεσιν οἰοπόλοισιν,
Ἐν Σιπύλῳ, ὅθι φασὶ θεάων ἔμμεναι εὐνὰς
Νυμφάων, αἵ τ' ἀμφ' Ἀχελώϊον ἐρρώσαντο,
Ἔνθα, λίθος περ ἐοῦσα, θεῶν ἐκ, κήδεα πέσσει.
Il. 24—v. 614.—

In allusion to this last sad condition of our fabled heroine, Ausonius has left the following epitaph.

EPITAPHIUM

NIOBÆ, IN SIPYLO MONTE JUXTA FONTEM SEPULTAE.

[XXVII.]

Thebarum regina fui: Sipyleïa cautes
Quæ modo sum. Læsi numina Latoidûm.
Bis septem natis genetrix læta, atq; superba,
Tot duxi mater funera, quot genui.
Nec satis hoc divis. Duro circumdata saxo,
Amisi humani corporis effigiem. [haeret:
Sed dolor, obstructis quanquam vitalibus,
Perpetuasq; rigat fonte pio lachrymas.
Pro facinus! Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ?
Durat adhuc luctus, matris imago perit.

IMITATED.

Once queen of Thebes, my form in wrath destroyed,
Was by Latona's offspring chang'd to stone;—
Thrice seven dear children pleas'd a mother's pride,
And thrice seven deaths my heart was doom'd to moan:
Nor were the gods appeased: This flinty rock
Conceals the ruins of my human form;
But grief, these stony vitals ~~that but~~ mock,
In ~~restless~~ fountain distils tears ever warm.

Still common griefs — their source

Oh! is such wrath in heavenly bosoms
cherish'd?—
For lo—my grief remains—~~my~~ the mother's
semblance perish'd!—

E.